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ABSTRACT

The concept "performance-based teacher education" connotes a program designed specifically to provide the prospective teacher with learning experiences that will prepare him to assume a specified teaching role. Successful completion of the program is accomplished only when the teacher candidate provides evidence that he possesses specified requisite knowledge and can carry out in practice specified teaching functions. Most of the programs studied thus far are designed so that the professional studies component is the part that is performance-based. This component is a collection of units including behavioral objectives, independent study, and periodic assessment and feedback. Some programs, however, focus on the performance of pupils. In this case, the objectives for pupil learning must be translated into appropriate teaching competencies before a teacher preparation program can be designed. Some of the promising practices currently receiving new or renewed emphasis on performance-based programs are sharper focus on objectives, attention to individual differences, integration of theory and practice, and change in the role of the teacher. Although there are numerous problems in the design and evaluation of performance-based programs, it is hoped that this new approach will provide one means of bringing about needed reforms in public education. (RT)

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PERFORMANCE-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION: WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

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Performance-Based Teacher Education: What's It All About?

By Karl Massanari

Charged with the responsibility for clarifying the notion of performance-based teacher education and for assisting institutions and agencies interested in operating such programs, the AACTE Committee on Performance-Based Teacher Education* has devoted most of its attention during the past seven months to such activities as: reviewing the literature, developing an annotated bibliography, setting up an information clearinghouse, visiting and making case studies of centers where performance-based programs are in operation, commissioning needed papers, discussing issues and unanswered questions, identifying promising practices, and sorting out what appear to be the essential characteristics of these programs.

While the committee has not yet developed its first statement of tentative conclusions about the state of the art -- a task which has been given high priority -- the staff can report certain observations and generalizations which reflect the committee's thinking to date.

Defining "Performance-Based"

The concept "performance-based teacher education" connotes a program designed specifically and explicitly to provide the prospective teacher with learning experiences and instruction that will prepare him to assume a specified teaching role. Successful completion of the program is accomplished when, and only when, the teacher candidate demonstrates that he is competent to assume the role for which he has prepared; that is, he must provide satisfactory evidence, not only that he possesses specified requisite knowledge, but also that he can carry out in practice specified teaching tasks and functions. It is the degree of specificity and explicitness in program design and in competence to be demonstrated that tends to distinguish performance-based programs from traditional programs. In this sense, a preparation program for any professional school position can be performance-based.

In practice, performance-based teacher education is being defined differently by different people. Most programs in operation appear to focus on the performance of the prospective teacher and/or the teacher on-the-job. A few programs, however, focus on the performance of the pupils to be taught in the elementary and secondary schools. These two approaches result in different ways of designing preparation programs and evaluating teacher performance.

If one focuses on the former, then the question of what elements are to be included in considering the performance of the prospective teacher or the teacher on-the-job becomes important. Most, if not all, of the preparation programs studied thus far are designed so that the professional studies component is the part that is performance-based; the general studies and specialized studies have not been reconstituted. Within the professional studies component, emphasis is placed on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by the teacher and on practice experiences in simulated and real-life situations.

Apparently, the professional studies component is a collection of performance-based instructional units requiring much independent study by the prospective teacher. Specific behavioral objectives are defined prior to instruction, in terms indicating the kinds of evidence regarding performance that would be acceptable to show that the objectives had been attained. Both the objectives and the kinds of evidence are made explicit to the learners at the outset of the program. For each performance objective, the learning of the prospective teacher is guided by periodic assessment and feedback.

The learner attains the objective whenever he can produce the required evidence in the terms originally stated; he produces such evidence by demonstrating that he has the requisite knowledge and/or he can perform the specified tasks acceptably. The emphasis, therefore, is on exit rather than

entrance requirements. While some adaptations are made for operating a performance-base program in the context of existing academic policies (course packaging, grade reporting, etc.), it seems clear that such programs are less time-oriented than standard programs. Time becomes a variable rather than a constraint; each prospective teacher takes as long as he needs to attain the stated objectives.

Pupil Performance

If one focuses on the performance of the pupils, then other kinds of questions become important. In one program observed by the committee, attention was being centered on a revision of the secondary school social studies curriculum and on the preparation of teachers for the revised curriculum. A major task in such an effort is to translate the objectives for pupil learning into appropriate teaching competencies. This step must take place before a teacher preparation program can be designed. When the focus is on pupil performance, there is the possibility -- if not probability -- that more attention will be given to assessing teacher performance, per se, than to the redesigning of teacher preparation programs. Ultimately, of course, the real "pay-off" of good teaching is pupil learning. But whether or not the best way to effect major changes in teacher education, at this point in time, is through focusing on pupil learning remains unanswered.

Other characteristics of the professional studies components of programs visited by the committee are related, directly or indirectly, to the performance-based concept. The base of decision-making is broadened to include the school, professional organizations, and the community. In some programs, negotiation between teacher and student is stressed in setting goals and in selecting supporting learning experiences; that is, both teacher and student are <u>designers</u> of the learning that the student undertakes. There is emphasis in preparation programs on the human relations aspect of teaching. A systemic approach

is used in designing, evaluating, and modifying programs. Programs tend to be field-centered (in the schools) rather than campus-centered. Preparation for professional roles tends to be viewed as continuing throughout the career of the professional rather than as only preservice education.

As yet, it is not clear whether these characteristics are essential to the notion of performance-based teacher education. However, it is clear that some of these ideas have their roots in a democratic value system, an appropriate base for the preparation of teachers for schools in American society.

Promising Practices

Many of the ideas that are currently incorporated in performance-based programs are ideas that teacher educators have supported over the years in different forms and under other labels. This fact does not minimize their importance; rather, it makes them all the more important.

Some of the promising leads currently receiving new or renewed emphasis in performance-based programs are:

Sharper focus on objectives: They are determined in advance, made explicit, and used as a basis for evaluating performance.

Individualization of the responsibility for learning: Responsibility is shifted from the teacher to the individual learner.

More attention to individual differences: Learners may select different learning experiences and choose alternative routes to achieve the stated objectives.

Learning experiences are related more directly to the objectives: Learning materials, resources, and experiences are directly related to specific objectives, and, consequently, the learning focuses on the objectives more than on the resources used to attain them; learning becomes a means to an end.

Individual assessment and feedback: As early as possible and on a continuing basis, the prospective teacher is provided feedback concerning his performance as he works toward attaining each objective.

More effective integration of theory and practice: Practice experiences, either in simulated or real-life situations, tend to be related closely to the theory being studied; they are incorporated in the program at the most opportune time.

Evaluation focuses not only on what the learner knows, but also on how he performs in actual teaching situations: Objectives are typically stated as performance criteria, providing a more effective basis for evaluation.

Change in the role of the teacher: The teacher is viewed more as an enabler of learning than a dispenser of knowledge.

Satisfaction with program: Both students and teachers appear to have a high degree of satisfaction with the preparation programs. Students have ample opportunity to provide inputs that will modify programs, and faculty members consider such inputs seriously. Also, students generally seem highly motivated to pursue learning activities that will help them attain stated objectives.

Problems Raised

While the committee has identified certain promising leads in performance-based programs, it has also identified some problems and concerns central to any attempt to understand and clarify what is happening, among them, the following:

Danger of "narrowness": Problems can arise from focusing on specific teaching behaviors at the expense of concern for the Gestalt of teaching performance from focusing on the instructional elements in the program

at the expense of concern for the program as a whole, and from applying the performance-based concept to only the professional studies component of the preparation program.

Establishing performance criteria: How specifically should they be spelled out? Can performance criteria be established that deal with generic elements of teaching, or must they be spelled out in very specific terms? Who should establish them? How high should the hurdles be? Who decides? Can appropriate performance criteria be established in the affective domain? Can criteria be established that foster creativity?

Assessing performance: Who should assess teaching performance? How should performance be assessed? What instruments and procedures should be used, and can better means be developed to make assessments? Can performance in the affective domain be assessed? How will the results of assessments be used?

Designing programs: Are the differences between elementary and secondary school teaching of such a nature that separate types of performance-based preparation programs should be designed?

Broad-based participation: What constitutes broad involvement in designing and evaluating programs? Who represents the community? Who speaks for the profession?

High expectation levels: Is the expectation level for prospective teachers too high in relation to conditions under which they will be working?

Needed research: How can we obtain evidence to show whether or not better teachers can be prepared in performance-based programs? Do pupils in elementary and secondary schools learn more when taught by

teachers prepared in performance-based programs? What is the relationship between teaching behavior and pupil product (learning)?

Certification of teachers: What is the relationship between performance-based certification and performance-based preparation programs?

Financial support: There is evidence that teacher education must be given a higher priority in the allocation of institutional funds if preparation programs are to be performance-based. Are performance-based programs more costly than traditional programs in terms of human, physical, and financial resources?

Language clarification: What is the definition of terms used in connection with performance-based teacher education, such as "competency-based", criterion-referenced", performance-based instruction", "performance criteria?"

Hope for Reform

In spite of these problems and concerns, the committee members believe that in the programs they have observed and studied, something important and exciting is happening. Their immediate task is to clarify further these important and exciting elements, and to seek some answers to the many questions surrounding the operation of performance-based teacher education programs.

To say that public education in the United States needs reforming is to understate what many educators and laymen have been saying with increased conviction for some time. It is hoped that incorporating the performance-based notion in preparation programs for professional school personnel will provide one means of bringing about this reform.

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The AACTE committee will soon release a working, annotated bibliography. After a June meeting, its first official statement of tentative conclusions on the state of the art will be prepared.

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